

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: OFF-CYCLE ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS

REF: ROME 12442

1. GOVERNMENT PARTIES AS BLOCK PERFORMED SATISFACTORILY IN LIMITED NOVEMBER 18-19 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS, WHICH INVOLVED ONLY 4.5 PERCENT OF NATIONAL ELECTORATE AND WERE CONCENTRATED IN NORTHERN ITALY. HOWEVER, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS SAGGED NOTICEABLY IN MOST MAJOR JURISDICTIONS, AND IN THE TRENTINO ALTO ADIGE REGION DROPPED 3.6 PERCENT BELOW THEIR 1972 PARLIAMENTARY RACE TOTALS AND 1.5 PERCENT BELOW THEIR 1968 REGIONAL ELECTION TALLIES. OFF-SETTING THESE LOSSES WERE IMPRESSIVE GAINS BY SOCIALISTS IN COMPARISON WITH 1972 1.4 PERCENT IN TRENTINO ALTO ADIGE AND 3 TO 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS IN MAJOR CITIES). REPUBLICANS CONTINUED PAST PATTERNS OF STEADY GROWTH WHILE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS GENERALLY HELD STEADY IN COMPARISON WITH 1972.

2. AMONG NON-GOVERNMENT PARTIES, THE PLI CONTINUED ITS DEMORALIZING DOWNWARD COURSE, LOSING ALMOST HALF ITS 1972 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION VOTE IN COMMUNES VOTING WITH PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM. IN TRENTINO ALTO ADIGE THE LIBERALS DROPPED TO 1.7 PERCENT FROM 3.7 PERCENT IN 1968 REGIONAL RACE AND 2.9 PERCENT RECEIVED IN 1972 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

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MSI GAINED SEATS IN COMPARISON WITH ITS PREVIOUS HOLDINGS BUT

DROPPED FROM ITS 1972 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION HIGH-WATER MARK. FAILURE OF PCI TO ABSORB ALL PSIUP VOTERS RESULTED IN OVERALL LOSSES FOR FAR LEFT. PCI, TAKEN ALONE, SHOWS SIGNS OF STAGNATION, GAINING WITH RESPECT TO PAST ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTION TOTALS BUT FAILING TO MATCH 1972 PARLIAMENTARY SHOWING.

3. COMMENT: SAMPLING WAS TOO SMALL AND NARROW FOR MEANINGFUL ANALYSIS BUT NONETHELESS WILL HAVE SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WILL BE DISCOMFORTED BY THEIR LOSSES BUT THEIR CONTINUED CENTER-LEFT COLLABORATION DOES NOT SEEM IN JEOPARDY. SOCIALIST AND REPUBLICAN SUCCESSES ARE LIKELY TO MAKE BOTH MORE SELF-ASSERTIVE IN VOICING THEIR CONFLICTING PHILOSOPHIES ON AUSTERITY AND REFORM. ON OTHER HAND, PSI VICTORY VINDICATES PARTY'S DECISION LAST YEAR TO PUSH FOR RENEWAL OF CENTER-LEFT AND FURTHER WEAKENS MINORITY WHICH HAD OPPOSED PSI REENTRY. VOLPE

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